

E-Courts Mission Mode Project

The eCourts Project was conceptualized on the basis of the “National Policy and Action Plan for Implementation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the Indian Judiciary – 2005” submitted by eCommittee, Supreme Court of India with a vision to transform the Indian Judiciary by ICT enablement of Courts.

Ecommittee is a body constituted by the Government of India in pursuance of a proposal received from Hon’ble the Chief Justice of India to constitute an eCommittee to assist him in formulating a National policy on computerization of Indian Judiciary and advise on technological communication and management related changes.

The eCourts Mission Mode Project, is a Pan-India Project, monitored and funded by Department of Justice, Ministry of Law and Justice, Government of India for the District Courts across the country.

THE PROJECT ENVISAGES

- To provide efficient & time-bound citizen centric services delivery as detailed in eCourt Project Litigant’s Charter.
- To develop, install & implement decision support systems in courts.
- To automate the processes to provide transparency in accessibility of information to its stakeholders.
- To enhance judicial productivity, both qualitatively & quantitatively, to make the justice delivery system affordable, accessible, cost effective, predictable, reliable and transparent.

Phase-I :

In Phase-I of the eCourts Project beginning from 2007, a large number of Court Complexes, Computer Server Rooms and Judicial Service Centres were readied for computerization of the District Courts. The District and Taluka Court Complexes covered in Phase-I were computerized with installation of hardware, LAN and Case Information Software (CIS), for providing basic case related services to the litigants and the lawyers.

A large number of District Courts launched their websites for the convenience of the different stakeholders. The Change Management exercise was undertaken to train the Judicial Officers and Court Staff in the use of computers and Case Information System (CIS) was successfully implemented.

The Judicial Officers were trained by the Master Trainers trained from amongst them for continuing training programme. The CIS Master trainers have trained District System Administrators (DSAs) in the use of CIS. The DSAs have trained all the Court Staff in the use of CIS. The data entry for all pending cases has reached an advanced stage of completion. The Process Re-Engineering exercise was initiated to have a fresh look on the process, procedures, systems and Court Rules in force in the different District Courts under High Courts. The Phase-I concluded with extended timelines upto 30th March 2015.

Phase II:

The Policy and Action Plan Document Phase-II of the ecourts Project, received approval of

Hon'ble the Chief Justice of India on 8th January 2014. The government of India sanctioned the project on 4th August 2015. In Phase-II, the covered courts are provisioned for additional hardware with (1+3) systems per Court Room, the uncovered Courts of Phase-I and the newly established Courts with (2+6) systems per Court Room and the Court Complexes are provisioned for hardware, LAN etc.

The dynamic implementation structure provides for greater participation and cooperation between the eCommittee, the Department of Justice (Government of India), NIC, DietY and Ministry of finance. It provides for High Courts as Implementing Agency, of the project under its jurisdiction. The Infrastructure Model provides for adopting Cloud Computing Architecture which is efficient and cost effective, while retaining the present Servers Rooms as Network Rooms and Judicial Service centers as Centralized Filing Centres. Provision has been made for computerization of office of District Legal Services Authority; Taluka Legal Services Committee, the National Judicial Academy and the State Judicial Academies for efficient delivery of services and training.

Continuing with the implementation of Free and Open Source Solutions (FOSS), Phase-II has adopted the Core-Periphery model of Case Information Software, the core being Unified as National Core, while the periphery developed according to requirement of each High Court, with NIC, Pune continuing to be the Centre for Software Development and related applications, ensuring software compatibility and interoperability, both horizontally and vertically, with the data including metadata to be unified and standardized.

In Phase-II, all the remaining Court Complexes are provisioned to be connected with Jails and Desktop based Video Conferencing to go beyond routine remands and production of under-trial prisoners. It will also be used for recording evidence in sensitive cases and gradually extended to cover as many types of cases as possible. With an emphasis on Capacity Building of Judicial Officers and Process Re-Engineering, the Phase-II provides for Judicial Knowledge Management System including Integrated Library Management System and use of Digital Libraries.

The Phase-II of the project lays great emphasis on service delivery to the litigants, lawyers and other stakeholders. The websites will be Accessible Compliant and to the extent possible, the information will be available in the local languages. The applications for mobile phones, SMS and emails are extensively used as platforms for dissemination of information. Kiosk will be provided for every Court Complex. Certified copies of documents will be given online and ePayment Gateways will be provided for making deposits, payment of court fees, fines etc. The National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG) will be further improvised to facilitate more qualitative information for Courts, Government and Public.

ecourts.gov.in :

On 7th August 2013, Hon'ble the Chief Justice of India launched the e-Courts National portal ecourts.gov.in of the eCourts Project. More than 2852 Districts and Taluka Court Complexes have secured their presence on the NJDG portal ecourts.gov.in and are providing Case Status, Cause lists online with many of them also uploading orders/judgments. The data of more than 7 crore pending and disposed of cases and 3.3 crore orders/judgments of District Courts in India is available on NJDG at present.

With dynamic real time data generated and updated continuously, the NJDG is serving as a source of information of judicial delivery system for all the stakeholders. It is regularly analyzed for meaningful assistance in policy formation and decision making. The NJDG is working as National data warehouse for case data including the orders/judgments for Courts across the country with full coverage of District Courts.

The Online Analytical Processing, and Business Intelligence Tools will help in the summation of multiple databases into tables with summarized reports for preparation of informative management system and dashboards for effective Court and Case Management. The Judicial Management Information System will be helpful in litigations and adjudication pattern analysis and also the impact analysis of any variation in governing factors relating to law, amendments, jurisdiction, recruitment etc. It will also serve as judicial performance enhancing measure for policy makers to be used for decision support system.

Composition of the eCommittee, Supreme Court of India for Phase II:

(a) Hon'ble the Chief Justice of India as Patron-in-Chief of the eCommittee

(b) Hon'ble Judge Incharge, eCommittee.

(c) Regular Members:

(i)Member (Processes) : Generally to look after areas relating to implementation and application of Judicial Processes and automation thereof with respect to computerization of the Courts, documentation; aspects of judicial /administrative process workflow of Court functioning, Court Management and their incorporation in CIS, and eCommittee office administration, arrangements of Meetings, liaisoning with and representation at DoJ and other Government Departments for Project implementation, eCommittee correspondence, coordination amongst Members-eCommittee.

(ii)Member (Project Management) : Generally to look after the Project Monitoring Unit (PMU) of the eCommittee and coordination with DoJ-PMU, also to look after overall day to day functions of the eCommittee-PMU and data collection and collation exercise and thereby consolidation of overall progress status of eCommittee and eCourts Project.

(iii)Member (Human Resources) : Generally to look after areas relating to management and monitoring of Human Resources provisioned through the Project, ICT training and capacity building of Judicial Officers and Court Officials, Tutorial Material and content development, Change Management exercise including the attitudinal and mindset change aspect

(iv)Member (Systems) : Generally to look after areas of Operating System and Application Software customization, deployment and development exercise being directly undertaken by the eCommittee and through other agencies like NIC and finalization of design and specifications of the infrastructure of Hardware/LAN/WAN etc. being provisioned under the eCourts Project.

Role of High Courts:

(a)Implementing Agency:

The High Court will be the Implementing Agency for implementation of the Project in the Courts under its jurisdiction. This arrangement, apart from giving the requisite authority to High Court in resolving implementation issues, also entails responsibility to have the Project components implemented on time and the service delivery initiated as per the Litigants' Charter. For effectively implementing these objectives, the High Courts will continue to have the institutional structure as follows:

(i)High Court Computer Committee (HCCC): The High Court Computer Committee consisting of two or more sitting High Court Judges would oversee the various tasks related to implementation of eCourts Project components. The High Court Computer Committee would

recommend various policy measures, administrative restructuring essential for ICT implementation in consultation with the E-Committee.

Only the active participation, supervision and guidance of the High Court Computer Committee can ensure the successful implementation of the Project. This becomes more important in view of the effective decentralization being introduced in the Project and the High Court becoming the Implementing Agency of the Project.

(ii) Central Project Coordinator (CPC): The Central Project Coordinator would be a person of the rank of District Judge or Senior Civil Judge, who would co-ordinate the implementation of various modules/ tasks of the Project. The Central Project Coordinator would have a dedicated team of identified supporting staff. The CPC would coordinate with the eCommittee and the vendors, Connectivity Providers, State Data Centre, NIC-Pune team (for CIS) etc. for the implementation of all the tasks entrusted by the E-Committee. The Central Project Coordinator should be associated full time and exclusively for the eCourts Project. The responsibilities assigned to the Central Project Coordinator are quite onerous and the Chief Justice of the High Court may be requested to nominate a competent and efficient officer as a Central Project Coordinator. The Computer Committee of the High Court should ensure that the Central Project Coordinator adheres to the time lines and targets. Communication channels must be kept open with the eCommittee at all times through ecourts.nic.in that is the PPMS portal. The eCommittee will be accessing these websites on a daily basis. Central Project Coordinators should update the information on a weekly basis. It will be reiterated to the High Courts that the CPC should be exclusively working for computerization only and no other unrelated duty should be assigned to the CPC. Apart from the duties relating to infrastructure deployment, the CPC will also be responsible for overall control of the CIS Periphery Development Team in coordination with the High Court NIC Coordinator for periphery development and its proper integration with CIS Core as per eCommittee guidelines.

(iii) District Court Computer Committee (DCCC): The District Court Computer Committee would consist of one Senior Additional District Judge and two Sr. Civil Judges or one Sr. Civil Judge one Civil Judge along with District System Administrators and System Administrator trained during the Phase I of the Project. This Committee would perform the overall monitoring of the Project implementation in the District under the overall supervision of the Principal District Judge. This Committee would work in close co-ordination with the Central Project Coordinator (CPC) of the High Court. The committee would undertake the various tasks detailed in the subsequent chapters, at District and Taluka/Tehsil/Sub-division levels.

(iv) Nodal Officer for Every Court Complex: There will be a Judicial Officer designated as a Nodal Officer in every Court Complex who is well conversant with ICT concepts and takes keen interest in computerization of the Courts. The Nodal Officer of the Court Complex will be the point of day to day contact for the CPC of the eCourts Project. High Court for follow up and monitoring of the Project progress and resolving the implementation issues.